

# **The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Contingency Plan for Possible Shutdown of Government Functions**

**January 2018**

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

General: In the event that Congress is unable to enact appropriations or a continuing resolution, essentially all activities of the BLM will be halted with the exception of law enforcement, emergency response functions, and operations necessary to prevent a safety risk to life, property, or resources. Without appropriated funds, there is no authority to incur obligations, including obligations for salaries, except in situations involving orderly shutdown of the bureau or to protect life and property. In the event that a shutdown occurs, the Department will notify bureaus to begin an orderly shutdown of unfunded functions. This will require the furlough of a majority of BLM employees. Voluntary services from employees will not be accepted. Because access to the public lands cannot be restricted in many circumstances, the BLM may take practical steps to close facilities and post signs notifying the public that BLM services will not be provided during a shutdown. While it is our goal to provide access to visitors, we will not be providing visitor services.

Consistent with guidance in OMB Circular A-11, the number of employees who will be retained as "excepted" (i.e., not furloughed) is approximately 670. These FTE fall under the following categories:

- Those employees who are engaged in law enforcement;
- Those employees who are needed to protect life and property and are not otherwise exempt.

The BLM will maintain only those staff needed:

- In the Washington Office for leadership in overseeing excepted activities, Budget, Procurement, and Communications,
- At the National Operations Center for bureau-wide Finance/Acquisition and IT systems support for excepted activities,
- To respond to emergencies or threats to safety of human life and protection of resources and property across the States, such as high risk Inspections and Enforcement for oil and gas and logging operations, Rights of Way contracts and the management of wild horse and burro holding facilities.

There are several groups of employees in the exempt category who will continue to report to duty including: exempted employees that are funded by the Helium Fund, working with BIA on the Buy-Back Program, and in Alaska working on the administration and regulation of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

All employees will spend up to four hours completing shutdown activities to include securing facilities, completing personnel and financial processes, notifying external partners and customers of the shutdown, and cancelling meetings/events. Employees will be in a furlough status immediately upon completion of shutdown tasks. After the initial shutdown procedures are completed, the BLM would maintain approximately 550 employees on-call. The BLM has approximately 9,500 employees and would furlough approximately 8,700 employees during the funding lapse.

The Assistant Director for Business, Fiscal and Information Resources Management and Assistant Director for Human Capital Management will be responsible for implementation of this plan.

Non-Appropriated Funding: Although the BLM has “no-year” funding, carryover balances are insufficient to continue normal operations. The BLM also maintains several reimbursable funds. However work on such projects or funded with these accounts will not continue during a shutdown because the regular discretionary appropriations required to support this work are not available.

New funding obligations cannot be made after the shutdown, except those needed to protect safety, health and property, such as HAZMAT emergency responses, fire protection, etc. Emergency rehabilitation/stabilization will be handled in the same manner as other potential emergency situations such as hazardous materials incidents, i.e. a limited number of employees will be on call to deal with emergencies.

Employee Travel: Any employee in travel status will follow the Department issued guidance on travel.

Visitor Management: The BLM will close and secure visitor centers on public lands unless they are operated by a concessionaire and do not require BLM staff support. The operation of each facility must be evaluated on a site-specific basis and in light of any contractual requirements.

Visitor activities that require a permit may be canceled or postponed if they require BLM Staff that don't fall into any other exception contracted operations such as trash collection and toilet cleaning will be suspended unless they pose a health or safety risk. While BLM land remains open to the public, BLM will post signs indicating that no maintenance or other services will be provided by BLM.

#### Special Recreation Permit Authorizations and Concession/Commercial Recreation Leases

Commercial, competitive, and group authorization for events and activities -- Leases and some commercial outfitter and guide special recreation permits can continue operations as long as they do not need BLM field monitoring or regulatory oversight in the short term. No new activities or launches will occur unless they meet the exceptions discussed above. New permit applications, modifications and renewals will not be received or processed. However, cost recovery events scheduled within 48 hours of the onset of the shutdown, which would pay BLM staff salary, will be allowed to proceed. Certain events operating under approved special use permits with a cost recovery provision may continue. If BLM staff support for the event is required, those

employees may temporarily be placed on the excepted list for the duration of the event. Local BLM offices will notify permit holders of any changes.

Other events scheduled to occur during the government shutdown will be canceled, postponed, or suspended. Vendors' operations will be suspended.

Individual permits in special areas - Use of permitted areas may continue, however, no maintenance or other services will be provided by BLM. Any entry onto BLM land is at the visitor's sole risk.

#### Volunteers

Volunteer activities would be discontinued during the shutdown.

#### Campgrounds and Other Recreation Sites

Campgrounds, boat ramps, and other recreation sites will be open. However, all facilities will be operationally shut down and posted accordingly, restrooms locked, and water systems shut down. Consistent with other Federal recreation providers, occupied sites would be given 48 hours' notice that services including water, electricity, restrooms and visitors centers will be turned off and closed. Operational shutdown activities for the sites would be completed within the 48 hour period. Visitors may remain at these sites at their sole risk.

#### National Recreation Reservation System (NRRS)

NRRS will be shut down. This is consistent with sister agencies that use the system. Refunds for previous reservations will be available through normal NRRS processes.

BLM Agency Technical Representatives will initiate a closure of all BLM Rec.gov facilities under the following procedure:

- a) All BLM facilities will have a message posted at a bulletin board stating the site is closed until further notice.
- b) Recreation.gov will not allow anyone to make reservations for any BLM facility.
- c) The Recreation.gov contractor will be open for business throughout any closure for customer service only and will NOT be taking advance reservations.
- d) Area POCs will be responsible for lifting closures once the shutdown has ended - (since each area may have slightly different reopening plans and time frames, they must notify Active Network (NRRS contractor) when to resume normal operations specific to their facility).

Cancellations/Refunds: Once notified of the government shutdown, cancellations will be processed according to the following:

1. Any customer that wants to cancel all or part of an upcoming reservation (that falls within any part of the shutdown period) may do so with a full refund by calling the customer service line (888) 448-1474.

2. Any reservation which starts and finishes within a period of time that the government is shutdown will automatically be refunded in full.
3. Anyone who is in a campground on the day of the closure and is asked to depart will be given a refund of the unused days. (Areas may also authorize a full refund for the entire stay).
4. Extended reservations will not be cancelled or refunded until the end date of their stay has come and gone. If sites reopen and there is still time on a visitor's reservation and the visitor still wants to come for a partial period, the remainder of their reservation will be intact. Refunds will be provided for any unused nights.